

Remarks/Arguments

The claims are amended to overcome the five objections listed at page 2 of the office action.

Background

As pointed out in paragraph [0003], when processing seed cotton, the handling system must be able to effectively separate all the cotton material from the wrap before the baled seed cotton enters the cotton gin. Wrapped cotton loses bale shape integrity quickly as the wrap is removed, and therefore substantial difficulties must be overcome to provide a system that advantageously utilizes the wrap to maintain a compact and clean entry configuration while allowing full cotton removal, eliminating spillage, and providing reliable wrap removal. Unlike the emptying system in cited 3,853,235 Lambert reference, applicants' method and apparatus for handling cotton does not deal with closed containers such as multi-walled bags with glued or sewn ends or cartons with pasted tops and bottoms or the like (see col. 12, lines 8 – 24 of Lambert, for example). Lambert deals specifically with perforating such closed containers along a plurality of lines, including completely transversely across the containers (i.e., col. 6, first paragraph).

* * * * *

Claim 1 is amended to include supporting the bale of cotton in a bale configuration using protective wrap extending around the bale; transporting a cotton bale having a with the protective wrap from a harvest location to a cotton gin; inserting an upper elongated wrap engaging structure into the bale; engaging a lower portion of the protective wrap with a lower wrap engaging structure; tensioning a lower portion of the protective wrap with the lower wrap engaging structure; positioning the cotton bale adjacent a receiver including moving the tensioned lower portion of the protective wrap bale in a conveying direction against a severing device to facilitate removal of the cotton and draping of the protective wrap over the upper elongated wrap engaging structure. Lambert, alone or in any combination with Deutsch and the remaining references fails to show or suggest such handling

method. Lambert transports generally closed containers rather than wrapped cotton bales, fails to show or suggest the steps of inserting an elongated wrap engaging structure into a cotton bale, tensioning a lower portion of the wrap using lower wrap engaging structure, and drape protective wrap over the wrap engaging structure as set forth in claim 1. Therefore claim 1 and claims 2 – 10 dependent therefrom are believed to be in order for allowance.

Claim 2 further includes rotating the lower wrap engaging structure, a step which is believed to not be shown or suggested by the references. Claim 3 further defines over the multi-slit method described in the Lambert patent, a method that would greatly increase the likelihood of cotton contamination by wrap material.

Claim 6 sets further includes that the elongated wrap engaging structure is positioned under the protective wrap a distance approximately equal to a length of the bale to support the wrap, a step which in combination with the steps of claim 1 is clearly not shown or suggested by the references.

Claim 11 is amended to further differentiate over the prior art and sets forth separating structure located adjacent the receiver for severing a lowermost portion only the protective wrap for egress of the cotton from the lowermost portion and for collapsing the shaped bale. The references, including Lambert and Deutsch, taken alone or in any combination with each other, simply fail to show or suggest a flexible protective wrap containing the cotton and defining a shaped cotton bale with conveying structure for positioning the cotton bale relative to a cotton gin receiver with the protective wrap maintaining the cotton generally in a shaped bale with separating structure adjacent the receiver for severing a lowermost portion only of the protective wrap. Lambert specifically sets forth structure for multiple cuts for transverse cutting offset from the lowermost portion of the container in addition to perforating each side of opposite edges of the container (see, for example, col. 5, line 40 – col. 6, line 26 of Lambert).

Therefore, claim 11 and claims 12 – 20 dependent therefrom are believed to be in order for allowance.

Claims 12 – 14 set forth a single slit arrangement, as opposed to the multi-slit arrangement of Lambert.

Claim 15 includes a wrap support inserted into the bale. Claim 15 further sets

forth that the wrap support comprises an elongate member connected to the bale handler. No such structure with wrap support is believed to be shown or suggested by the references.

Claim 20, dependent from claim 11, establishes that the conveying structure includes an adjustable bale support having opposed support members movable relative to the bale to tension the wrap engaging structure. Such tensioning structure in combination with the structure of claim 11 is not shown or suggested by the references.

Claim 21 is amended to set forth bale supports spreadable to tension an area of the protective wrap, and separating structure including a cutter providing a slit in the tensioned area of the protective wrap in a direction generally parallel to the direction of bale movement. The devices in Lambert appear to be simply gripping devices with no teaching or suggestion of positive tensioning of a bale wrap to facilitate slitting in the direction of movement. Therefore claim 21 and claims 22 – 28 dependent therefrom are believed to be in order for allowance.

Claim 22 further includes forks are movable from a narrowed bale support position for supporting the bale to a widened cotton release position for facilitating release of the cotton to the receiver. This structure in combination with the structure of claim 21 is believed not be shown or suggested by the prior art. Claim 23 also sets forth that the forks include claw members to engage the protective wrap, a feature in combination with the above structure that is not shown or suggested by the references.

In conclusion, it is believed that this application is in condition for allowance, and such allowance is respectfully requested.

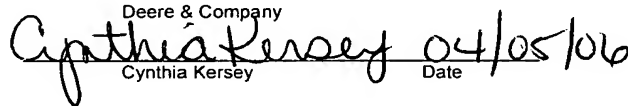
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Respectfully,


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